

ÉCHANGES

THIS BULLETIN IS, in its temporary form, for a group of comrades sharing similar positions and in close contact with one another, a means of exchanging news on struggles, discussions and criticisms and of publications based essentially on the New Movement i.e. on all the struggles of all kinds carried out by those directly concerned for their own emancipation. It is, therefore, important that each recipient make his own contribution to this end, in exchange for what he expects from others. He will, of course, determine the nature, the importance and the regularity of such contributions himself.

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MEETING

A get-together among the French participants to Echanges is to take place at Toulouse on the 4th and 5th November. We hope to discuss the way Echanges functions, the past balance sheet and future perspectives, criticisms and projects on the first day. The second day we hope to have a more general discussion.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- pamphlet on Spain is in the process of being written up
- discussion on the New Movement for a new international meeting in 1979
- discussion between several comrades in Echanges on the "crisis"
- news coming from France, Great Britain, Belgium and Eastern Europe
- pamphlet on the 1953 insurrection in East Berlin

STRUGGLES

INDIA

This letter is from a friend in India. The events which he describes took place in Kanpur; an industrial town in the state of Uttar Pradesh, which has nearly two million inhabitants, in a textile factory. We have received the leaflet "Jallianwala Gagh repeated in Kanpur", which we hope to translate in the next bulletin, unless we receive the longer piece promised, which we would then publish in full. Correspondence to the "Ad hoc committee for Inquiry into Kanpur massacre", c/o Gobind Mukhoty, 213 Joh Baha, New Delhi 110003.

"Both for yourselves as well as for Echanges et Mouvement we thought that we would write a detailed paper on what has been happening in Kanpur, which is a fairly large industrial township and where we have been in contact with people, who have actually formed incipient workers' committees and who are extremely critical of the unions. It was here that the workers beat up the trade unionists and held off the police from entering the factory premises by threatening to throw the managers into the boilers. This was in October and the workers successfully managed to get their wages, which had not been paid to them for three months, because of an internal family feud within the management. When the workers occupied the factories again on the 6th of December because again they had not paid their wages, a special section of the police was called in: they gunned down between 50 - 100 workers in cold blood: the official figures were that 11 workers had been shot. Some of us went to Kanpur immediately after hearing about the fighting, collected as much information as possible and printed 10,000 pamphlets to publicise the news - in the papers it was reported that the workers had killed two

of the managers and that was the reason that the police had to resort to firing: it became clear that the whole police operation had been carefully planned earlier by the management of the mill in collusion with the local bureaucracy (in fact we subsequently discovered that this plan had been o.k.'ed by the Home minister) and the police. The managers were killed after the police started firing - and it is still not clear whether they were killed in rage by the workers or got caught in the police firing. There have been other such firings, particularly in this particular state Uttar Pradesh but none in which so many workers were gunned down. After the firing a relief committee was set up by a joint association of the trade unions. However most of the money went into their own pockets. As counterposed to this workers of other factories, many of whom were lower echelon cadres of the same unions and some of whom had no organisational backing as such formed an alternative committee which organised the relief for the families of the workers and which struggled to get the factory reopened.

This relief committee called itself a "Samyukta Morcha" and saw itself as a working class organisation, irrespective of adherence to any ideology or membership of any of the people who made it up to any party, and became a forum for discussion of issues like the union bureaucracy, leadership etc. Many workers attended meetings of the morchas and refused to let the old leaders talk at all, and although they gave a patient hearing to other not so important leaders - they were called "neta's" over here - refused to be overawed or intimidated by the fluent jargon of the latter.

The position at the moment is that the workers of this particular mill are refusing to have any dealings with the trade unions at all and want to constitute a new "samyukta Morcha" voted for and determined by themselves. They also want to take up issues raised by workers in other factories, they are demanding the reopening of a mill that was shut down 20 months ago.

Of course the trade unionists are trying to recuperate this effort of self-activity of the workers by saying that this Morcha should be made of and constituted by members of the unions and not the workers themselves but so far this is violently opposed by some section of workers.

This is only a very sketchy picture of what happened there, but we will definitely give you a more detailed account soon.

In areas around Delhi, quite a remarkable thing is happening. Remember the burning down of the factory I have told you about. Well, a lot of the workers there who participated in the burning down were T.U. militants and could not understand the attitude of the bureaucracy and leadership of the unions to what they considered as a perfectly legitimate retaliatory activity.

They were rather hostile in fact to our paper Philhal, because it carried articles rather critical of the T.U.'s. However now when some of us went to the area after some months, they are raging mad with the bureaucracy and see that the unions are refusing to take up certain very important issues - a major one being victimisation of militant workers. In fact they are trying to set up non-sectarian committees to try and fight against the management - this in an area that has been part of a huge movement towards unionisation over the last year or so and where the most critical comments and attitudes about the unions are coming from those who initially struggled for the formation of those same organisations. These committees are completely independent and outside of either existing union or party organisations. It is a little difficult to say what the outcome of all this will be: I feel very strongly that it is not just a question of the self-activity of people that makes it important but the form this activity takes: for instance if the net result of these committees is that they become more democratic rank and file unions, although it is still useful experience in terms of exercising one's own will, it will still remain to a large extent a very limited struggle. However I do not think that this is a very real possibility since the workers are not only fed up of the union bureaucrats, but also of the limitation of the forms of struggle possible within the unions: the most important thing is that workers communicate with each other and generalise these forms. Through our involvement with Philhal we have been able to put people from different areas in touch with each other, just because of our independent contact with them." (May 30, 1978)

QUEBEC

From Montréal (September): ... "You spoke in your pamphlet "U.S.A. - a changing reality" which I saw in the local bookshop collective (Centre de diffusion libertaire) of translating the American book "Strike" into French. I thought of offering my help. I remain interested in helping you to translate other articles, pamphlets etc., which you would like to produce. ...

I also wanted to write you about Québec about which you never write in your articles and with the reason that the struggles are no doubt less "spectacular": this does not mean that they do not contain very interesting elements, but you cannot rely on the media (official, trade union, or left wing groups) to be informed, which means that even we lack information: you need to go to the actual scene of the conflict like Rachleff did at Westinghouse in the U.S.A.-pamphlet.

The life-style in Québec is like the rest of North America, same consumer goods, same alienation about them plus the feel-

ing of belonging to a community coming from a shared language and national history i.e. exploitation of the French speaking, strong influence of the Catholic church until very recently, colonisation by the English etc.

The central point of the problem, apart from the economic aspects, is the language which new laws are just beginning to protect. The nationalist feeling is really a desire to speak our own language at work and school as well as at home, but it is also the demand for a certain autonomy, for a lesser degree of exploitation, just as for so many other people in the world. This nationalist sentiment, although extremely particularist, is evidence of a certain degree of resistance, often popular resistance. The trouble is that the feeling is never expressed, it seems, without some group of political leaders, representatives of a national bourgeoisie or a future bureaucracy getting mixed up with it.

This is the case in Quebec. The period of the violent resistance of a minority of a socialist "tendency", the F.C.Q., has given way to the rise of the Parti Québécois (P.Q.) whose arrival at the seat of provincial power only reflects the ever greater participation of the French speaking bourgeoisie in the running of the economy (previously they had very little access to managerial positions) and in consequence their demand for a greater share in the profits.

The government of the P.Q. has a supposedly "progressive" attitude, because it has little less contempt for the electoral mass which has brought it to power, than for example, the National Union, the party that ruled in Quebec for over 20 years. The leader of the U.N. Maurice Duplessis is either the "national hero" or the "bête noir" of the Province. He had a very repressive attitude towards the working class and unionisation. What the P.Q. shares with the U.N. is its basic compromise in the face of the USA. There are a few madmen who dream of "socialist" Independence, but the American dollar is king here like it is in the rest of Canada and it is around this dollar that everything revolves.

Immediate direct access to U.S. investment without having to pass through the sub-headquarters of Toronto and Ottawa are surer for the multinationals. That is what the Quebec bourgeoisie wants in the main. They are ambitious and the rest of the Canadian bourgeoisie are not happy with this. They do not want to lose dollars.

In any case discontent with the federal government is not only limited to Quebec. A type of "Balkanisation" is beginning to take place. The Maritime provinces (the poorest and least industrialised), Alberta (the richest, which does not want to give up a part of its riches), everyone is challenging federal power for opposite reasons, represented by all sorts of politicians.

In the mean time the P.Q. is continually putting off the date for a referendum

to decide whether inhabitants want their taxes controlled by the provincial government or, as is now the case, by the federal government. To this end, so as not to have to raise taxes, the federal government has just announced big budget cuts which will hit the unemployed and employment in general.

Although national sovereignty in Quebec would probably mean a slight increase in wages for many workers, the combativity in Quebec remains very high, tending towards a new balancing of the inequalities of wages existing between different provinces in Canada. It is this combativity which is hindering the success of Lévesque and his friends in attempting to persuade American economists, managers and share holders that investments in Quebec are very profitable and would be more so, if Quebec independence was installed. If the Americans refused to co-operate, it would not be worth putting this political change into effect, because Quebec would suffer.

Since the coming to power of the P.Q. instead of calming down struggles have broken out and developed, not only at the work place, but also in community struggles.

Unionisation, which is already below the low level of the USA, is in the process of establishing itself through bitter conflicts inside industries like the textile industry or those employing many women or immigrants and of course in the service trades. There are two union federations: the F.T.Q. (mostly building workers and factories) and the C.S.N. (service industries and a small section of the manufacturing industries) plus a special teachers' federation. This last union and the C.S.N. are still at the stage of "fighting unions" who accept less concessions than the F.T.Q., which includes all the American unions affiliated to the Teamsters or the AFL-CIO. Its practices are in the main those of the U.S. labour unions, except for the C.S.N. many of whose leaders are well-known socialists, who have never had the chance of being in political positions, or at the rank and file level, leftists ... Anars, Maoists, Trots etc.

The unions known for their corruption like the textile union (workers burnt the union election ballot boxes two year ago) are considered "bad" unions. Even the C.S.N. has been accused of manipulating strikes, without getting higher wages as a result, but just with the aim of showing off a so-called combativity.

Much noise is made, and with reason, about the lack of safety measures at work (there are many accidents at work) and about scabs and strike-breakers, but new workers go back to work after lock-outs (the P.Q. in the end as promised had to pass a law against this practice). Of course for the unions the unemployed, the women and immigrants are put in the back-

ground. They have the harshest conditions and are still afraid to unionise. But in general the struggles stay well in line and controlled by the unions, be they "good" or bad ones.

Leftist are relatively recent here and are already beginning to lose ground. They had infiltrated the popular groups here which are fairly numerous and won a lot of "sympathisers" last year among young people disillusioned by the P.Q. and looking for a different leadership. But they ended up by growing tired of the endless ideological jargon, which they had never really assimilated. Many of them are tired of the pressure put upon them by these leftist groups, although they partly accept their type of action: intervention in factories, militarisation in the groups. Such groupings affected are housing committees, neighborhood groups, women groups, groups concerned with ecology, town planning, nuclear energy, the denunciation of consumer goods, (poor quality, adulterated food etc.), popular clinics, groups of defence of rights, against the system which encourages getting into debt (e.g. the rapid spread of credit cards), sometimes with a more global view (which makes them more approachable). These groups are very scattered but they help affect many people and make them concerned about problems at many different levels.

That is all I wanted to say for the moment. I still have much to do and learn on the subject. I have not spoken so much about the struggles themselves as of the global context, but all of you can tell me what you think of this, if you have the time."

FRANCE

The following contributions are perhaps not most representative of the "big" conflicts in France (industrial disputes at Renault, Moulinex, among air traffic controllers etc.), but they enable us just as much to get an idea of what is happening in France now.

From a contributor in Bourges (central France), July 1978:

"I want to give a local personal account which confirms the example given in your pamphlet on "le refus du travail" on page 67, on the factory of Gillette in Annecy. (note Echanges: this pamphlet will hopefully as soon as possible be translated into English).

My example concerns a small building contractor, the Surault company, comprising about 30 skilled workers all around 25 years old. They had a strike lasting a fortnight at the end of July 1976 which meant they went on holiday earlier than usual. The strike was more or less a wild-cat strike, since there were neither unions or members of unions in the firm.

Surault, in order to steal custom for a big building site situated only 200 metres from its workshops, offered lower prices than other contractors by not including in their estimates special allowances for travel expenses and meals payable to workers outside a certain defined zone as laid down by law in the joint employer union agreements for the building trade in the region. Surault thought, that because the building site was so close to their workshops, the workers would not take any notice.

It was not so. When they came back from their holidays at the beginning of September, the workers went to the local building union (C.G.T.) to get information to try and sue their employers. About a dozen joined the union. Some representatives were elected for the firm. From time to time they participated, not very enthusiastically, in local branch meetings, above to enquire about the progress of their court case.

Surault claimed hear bankruptcy and sent letters announcing his intention to give all union members the sack. However the tribunal ruled in favour of the workers. As soon as all the workers had got the allowance money due to them, they were never seen again at the local builders' union branch. That is what they wanted to show you: workers are capable of strong determination to defend their interests but do not have any illusions about long term prospects proposed by the unions. I do not say that "one swallow makes a summer", but who would be willing to claim that workers are only capable of "trade union consciousness"? After all, we are not asking them to make a coup d'état.

On the other hand they know very well how to use the union when they need to. The secretary of the local branch, an old bricklayer, C.P. member, says that he is exploited as much by his members as by the boss. His position oscillates between discouragement, "I'm fed up. Next year you will have to make out without me" and hard line sentiments, "They were right in the socialist countries to reintroduce production bonuses".

From a contributor in Caen (normandy), July 1978:

"The C.F.D.T. (social democrat "radical" union federation opposed to the C.P. controlled C.G.T.) is the majority union in our region, putting forward "left" policies in opposition to the C.G.T., which has lost much influence because of its too open support for the Communist Party during the recent elections; members are behind with their subscriptions and union dues. The C.G.T. once in the majority are now "marked men" among workers; At SMN (steelworks) once a C.G.T.-C.P. stronghold, the other union is now in the majority. At Saviem-Blainville (truck plant of Renault) it is the same. In the

more modern factories like R.T.C. (electronics) the C.G.T. hardly exists. At Moulinex, Jaeger, Blaupunkt (kitchen equipment, radio, hi-fi etc.) the C.F.D.T. is way in the lead. Only in the big nationalised concerns E.D.F. (electricity company), S.N.C.F. (railways) is there a majority C.G.T. membership.

The workers from Moulinex (kitchen and household equipment) demanded 400 FF extra a month (about £ 35) for all days taken off (forcibly) immediately before and after national holidays to be paid in full, a fifth week of annual vacation. They only achieved a very small wage rise, derisory in relation to the original demand, two of the extra days before national holidays will now be paid, but nothing was conceded on extra annual vacation. It is interesting to note that in the proposals made by the employers they proposed a bonus for good time keeping and lack of absences instead of payment for days before and after national holidays; and also that any additional vacation should be granted in function of individual application to work and good production.

Apart from this there are in fact quite a few small concerns involved in strikes in the region, but without any widespread effect. No one knows without being personally in the know, when the strikes begin and when they are over.

From a contributor working in the Peugeot carplant Montbéliard in Sochaux (Eastern France), May 1978:

"... The C.F.T. (Confederation Française du Travail, fascist type union sponsored by the employers) have never been very important at Sochaux; but on the other hand, if they have been able to get established at all, it is only because the other unions tolerate them. At the moment the regular unions, the C.G.T. and C.F.D.T. are hardly any different from the C.F.T. They have become just as reactionary ... the wages for semi-skilled workers at Peugeot are very low (the lowest for car workers throughout France). They range between 2,000 FF and 2,400 FF a month (about £ 180 to £ 200). We work 42½ hours a week. The line speeds are very fast and the big and little foremen and bosses are crazy as they are in any factory. It seems we must do something new now and go beyond the usual strikes. Perhaps sabotage, go-slows, lightening strikes etc. For several years now only a thousand out of 38,000 are ever affected by strikes at one time. CGT and CFDT represent only 2,000 members. The CFT - C.S.L. much less and it is not the terrible monster described by some; the regular unions and "left" parties are just as bad." ... (compare this with the Solidarity Motor Bulletin no. 8 article in this bulletin)

GREAT BRITAIN

The Ford strike (October 1978)

The policy of reducing the cost of labour which has been systematically applied throughout Europe since 1974 has benefited in Britain from the active support by the trade unions of the Labour Party government, together with the support of the C.B.I. (employers federation). All three have agreed under the so-called "social contract" to limit wage and price rises. "Phase three" of the voluntary contract covered the period July 1977 to July 1978. We can judge the results of this policy from figures which have been just published (in The Times of 7.10.1978): wages up 14,2% average
retail prices up 7,8% average
living standards up 3%
profits up 8,6%. (But in the second quarter of 1978 profits decreased with 16% after a rapid rise in 1975-1977 when, even then, they had not yet reached the levels of 1970).

Above all the quasi-legal limit of 10% on wage rises in "phase 3" had been largely ignored, if the average rise was 14,2%, above all through "productivity deals" which were to be allowed to achieve settlements above 10%, but which everyone agrees were in many cases completely fake as regards increased productivity.

For "phase 4" begun this July, the government reduced the "pay guidelines" to 5%. Previous years some employers preferred to grant wage rises when there were threats of strike action and took on instead the government and T.U.C. (Trade Union Congress) machinery: there were less risks doing this than conflicting with their workers. The government replied with "sanctions" on firms which broke the pay guidelines (withdrawal of government contracts etc.) and this did have some effect, above all on the smaller companies put on the "black list". However this threat was empty against the multinationals and big trusts whose word is law in the decision making organs of power. Ford for example defied the government by agreeing to a 12% wage rise last year without any action being taken against them and with no other result than to show to other firms that holes could be made in the "social contract".

No doubt recent falls in profit levels (despite record profits for Ford in 1977 in competition with the ailing British Leyland) led Ford to adopt a different policy in this year: they offered only 5% for this year's wage rise, hiding this time behind the government's pay guidelines and refused to negotiate on the claim for an average 25% increase and a 35 hour week.

The management reply had been hardly broadcast, when 2,500 workers on the day shift at the Halewood car plant (near Liverpool) and 500 at a smaller plant in

Southampton walked out suddenly straight away in disgust on Thursday 21st September. On Saturday 23rd September all the shop stewards at Halewood in response to workers spontaneous reaction voted a total unlimited strike; this spread and on Monday 25th September in the course of mass meetings called by shop stewards for the 57,000 production workers of the 23 Ford plants in Britain huge majorities voted for total strike. The movement was so great, that the two major unions involved (the T.G.W.U. first and then the A.V.E.W.) were forced in the end after a week to make the strike official.

There is no internal organisation of the strike: since Tuesday September 26th the factories are completely shut down and no one is working. The pickets are symbolic and small because they have no one to stop and no one to convince. Ford can neither import cars from other European factories nor export parts to be assembled elsewhere. All which carries the trade mark Ford is blacked by dockers in all British ports and by all transport workers. Therefore Ford cannot use their European factories against their British workers because of the solidarity of other British workers.

It is difficult to say at the moment (9th October) how it will end. With the Ford strike the workers find themselves in front of their own management hidden behind government policy, whereas previously government - union policy was so it was said applied against both workers and employers alike. A victory by Ford workers or even a lengthy strike threatens to break this new employer-government front. Ford have just announced that they are prepared to pay more than 5%, though not much more at present. The figure 8% is in the air.

Already the 13,000 skilled craftsmen of Leyland Cars are skirring. There is talk of a possible Vauxhall strike, since Vauxhall cars (owned by General Motors) will offer only "reasonable wage rises" masked by "productivity deals" which might even reach the rate of 20% increase.

At the recent Labour Party conference the Party delegates rejected the 5% guidelines, largely because of the vote of Party delegates representing the Trade unions. The government although composed of Party members is in no way legally bound by such votes, but the withdrawal of previous TUC-support will be a serious handicap. Until only a few weeks ago the unions were pledging support to the government and employers against the workers. But faced with such a rank and file upswell they can no longer totally support pay-guidelines, because it could mean the end of the unions. This climb-down by the unions was already beginning in early September, when the A.E.U.W. withdrew its threat to expell 32 toolmakers on strike for several weeks (they still are) in a Leyland plant in Birmingham, who are

manding parity of earnings with toolmakers in another factory in the Leyland group. Expulsion would have meant loss of work since Leyland is a closed shop. But the union backed down, because all 3,000 Leyland toolmakers declared they would strike if the men were expelled.

The figures quoted above show that the present conflict is only the end result of hidden, smaller struggles which have gone on throughout 1977-78. That these struggles have come out in the open with Ford shows that capitalism - Ford in this case - is trying to put an end to this gradual movement at the moment when it has become evident (in irrefutable) economic terms that all the illusions about the social contract are in ruins. The joint forces of the employers, unions and government are now getting together to try and build a new dike: but above all for this it is now necessary that the unions try to appear to be more "on the side" of the workers.

Chrysler workers beware

(Solidarity Motor Bulletin no. 8, available from Solidarity London, c/b 123 Lathom road, London E6) in English, 10 p.)

This is a resumé of a university dissertation by Jane Powell, which limits itself to certain methods used by Peugeot in its French car factories to dominate the labour force. A short preface and a hurried conclusion quickly prepared for the talk over by the French Peugeot-Citroën Company of Chrysler (Europe) announced recently have made this a tool of militancy.

As if struggles and ways of controlling a work force were not decided by the balance of power between the forces of capital and labour in each special case, as if an employer according to circumstances could pass from "democracy" to "totalitarianism", the pamphlet (see cover cartoon) waves in front of the workers of Chrysler UK the scarecrow of a "modern" employer using "retrograde" methods. Is it their English sense of humor or an intentional irony, which urges on the writers of the motor bulletin the necessity of showing these cardboard images to perfectly intelligent workers, whose own struggles have precisely been at the origin of the downfall of Chrysler (UK) (especially in the case of the Linwood factory in Scotland)? Isn't it more useful for the workers of the new group on both sides of the Channel to oppose the class relations of production in all their forms in the different factories in the group?

For an English public, the lip-wetting journalistic details of mercenary commandos launched contemptuously into the jungle of workers' struggles, could only give a totally false impression of what happens in France. Even more so, when we consider that the few references

to past events, constituting the background to relations inside Peugeot are often partly or totally incorrect (e.g. what happened in May '68 at Sochaux or the more recent raid by mercenaries in St. Etienne, where the "proper" union the C.G.T. played a much more important role in finishing the strike).

The introduction underlines the difference in productivity between Peugeot-Citroën-Chrysler (France, Simca) and that of Chrysler U.K.: the figures all are to the pride of English car workers, but in its desire to show that "hard" methods work, the text left out the fact that productivity in the giant French Renault car enterprise is higher still than that of Peugeot-Citroën-Simca, although Renault uses entirely different industrial relations methods, i.e. it works with the ordinary unions (especially the C.G.T.).

There are other factors special to France which must be considered:

- 90% of the workers on the line in all car factories are immigrants (in England the proportion is far less and their legal status is more secure), who can risk deportation, so that the employers have a real policing power over them (with the eventual aid of unions of whatever type);
- police can be used more systematically to make "wildcat" strikers "obey the law" when the control of a strike escapes the unions' clutches. The use of mercenary "militia" by employers is closer to this type of police intervention needed at a precise moment (after police excesses in 1968) than the setting up of a new scab union (the type of scab union which did exist in fact in Simca and Citroën before the merger with Peugeot).

Also the speed on the lines at Peugeot-Citroën factories are no faster than those at Renault or its subcontractor the Chausson truck company, which is dominated by the C.G.T. union and the Communist Party. It is only different methods of domination for the same results, with methods even often very close in fact, in work and deeds.

The picturing of a "retrograde" family set-up (Peugeot-Citroën) as opposed to a progressive non family one is very simplistic. The concentration of capitalism in France is such that the integration of banking houses with industrial capital in a financial oligarchy controls much of the French economy. It has strong international links. When the previous merger took place, that of Peugeot with Citroën the state put up an important sum to wipe out Citroën deficit and in exchange demanded the entrance of outside financial technocrats on the board of the "family" business; the merger with Chrysler means that Chrysler will have 15% of the whole concern. All this will mean something. The private sector of small family enterprise has indeed hung on much more in France than in Britain which makes a sector of French industry rather special when comparisons are

made, but this sector, especially since Gaullism was in power, has been reduced to a greater extent as concentration of capital grows.

What is happening at Peugeot with the use of private "militia" (for a temporary period only, in addition) is not illustrative of "anachronistic management", which is temporarily adopting old forms. What is the difference between the commands of the C.G.T. and the C.P. at Renault which has hampered workers on so many occasions, or those of the UAW in American auto-plants, or the D.G.B. at the Ford factory in Cologne in Germany with the use of armed groups at Peugeot? Simply that in one of the cases - Peugeot at Sochaux - the unions are not adapted enough to their function of regimenting the workforce. Peugeot, like Citroën, is perhaps a family firm, but above all after successive mergers this is a modern firm using modern methods of production and will therefore need a modern union structure. For reasons not only of "backwardness of the management", the normal unions (chiefly C.G.T. and C.F.D.T.) cannot play the role in Peugeot assigned to it by capitalism. In the crucial post 1968 period Peugeot, who never anything else before because an "enlightened" paternalism was sufficient before then, is trying to find a remedy for the lack of union power in its plants. A short comparative study would have shown that the building up of a union force is a long term job and that it rests above all on the foremen and the middle-management of the factories, be it with the C.G.T. at Renault (it is not by accident that the most troubled factories these days at Renault are the most recent) or at Simca in Poissy (near Paris) or at Citroën. In Peugeot the hasty setting up of fascist unions has failed as much as the traditional unions: it is only a question of time.

The pamphlet ignores other essential points: the transformation problems and their solutions with the transformation of industry. The past has little interest for the future. For proof of this you only have to look at the fact, that after refusing all negotiation with the union leaders prior to the merger going through, the French management of Peugeot-Citroën finally accepted such a meeting on 13th September 1978 before the merger had even finally been agreed by the government.

WEST GERMANY

The engineering workers' strike (contd. from previous numbers of Echanges)

On March 20th 1978 in the German Federal Republic (see Echanges no. 15) the print workers strike came to an end. On the day the newspapers came out again and the most important news they carried

was, that about 230,000 engineering workers had stopped work either on strike themselves or lock out by their employers.

The republic was then faced with a conflict far surpassing that of the press and dock strikes (see Echanges no. 14) for two reasons. First of all the strike was in the most important sector of the national economy, where 3,6 million workers are affected; secondly, because as in many other countries, agreements reached in this sector often serve as a model for other industries (even though the success of the previous dock strike was not without influence on workers' general combativity either).

The union I.G. Metall was very active. They could not help but be. Their leaders at Frankfurt knew only too well that they risked not only the loss of their image, but worse still of their members if they put in claims below those the dockers had seen met by their previous efforts. So they rejected an offer of a 3,5% wage rise and demanded 8%. Because the employers held firm and the workers were determined to fight the union leaders were put on the spot. "We are preparing for a conflict which will be as solid as a rock", said a certain Gotschlich, IG Metall bureaucrat (der Spiegel of 13.3.78). But his words did not describe the real state of affairs, but were said to try and frighten the employers into a peaceful settlement at the negotiations at Ludwigsburg. When these broke down, the IG Metall had no choice other than to call a strike. An engineering worker told the press: "It was not the IG Metall who wanted the conflict, it's the bosses." (die Welt, 23.3.78) It is quite possible that they did, when we consider the level of unemployment which could have given the employers the false idea that the workers would settle quite easily. Those who read my account in Echanges no. 15 will no doubt remember that M. Eugen Loderer, head of the IG Metall, stressed his willingness to go back to the negotiation table at any moment, right up to the last minute. We will see below that the union bureaucrats did their best to limit the strike and finish it as soon as possible.

Strikes had begun in the sector from March 15th. Five days before the end of the newspaper strike. The leadership of the IG Metall had their own "strategy". They did not call a strike for the whole industry but chose a fairly narrow battlefield, not an all-out war: they chose the joint state of Baden-Wurtemberg and the car factories there in particular.+

These factories had been greatly affected by the economic crisis in 1977. West Germany produced 4,1 million cars; takings had risen by 8% and the total turnover was 21 billion DM. As a result in Stuttgart for example unemployment was only at 3% as against a national level of 5,4%

and there was no short time working. So said the union bureaucrats, the factories concerned could easily grant our demands and would give in easily. These factories were Daimler-Benz and e.g. Porsche. But that was not the point. The whole of the engineering industry was concerned, because of the exemplary nature of all agreements reached and in the background the whole of German industry was implicated. So the negociators were not just against local car bosses but the entire organisation of engineering employers on a national level acting on behalf of the entire industrialist class.

This was not a secret. Everyone, including the union leaders themselves, knew this, so that we can conclude that their strategy was only a justification for hesitation and bad faith. In Rhénanie Westphalia, first centre of the engineering industry workers had already voted by a large majority for a strike, but they were held back in "reserve" by the union, because they wanted to limit the struggle as much as possible. Limited but with the appearance of broad extent. The fact that auxilliary "troops" were not put into action by the unions, but instead the bureaucrats hurried to re-start negotiations which lead to a not very impressive compromise, confirms the view given here.

In some respects the strike in the engineering industry resembled that at the newspapers:

1. it was called by the union: under shop floor pressure
2. employers replied with lock-outs
3. in very localised areas there were initiatives taken in contradiction with the union tactics. For example at Porsche, although IG Metall had not officially called the workers out on the strike, they struck in solidarity with workers on official strike.
4. the union leadership accepted an agreement way below original demands at a moment when rank and file combativity was holding firm against giving in.

However there were visible differences between the two strikes. For the print workers keeping their jobs in an industry in full modernisation was the most important thing. Not so for engineering workers. For the moment technical innovation has not led to an important reduction of the workforce. Those no longer needed for a specific task changed jobs inside the factories, which meant in many cases a change in category and consequent loss of pay, which is why union demands were above all wage rises and also the guarantee that re-organisation as a result of technical innovation would not result in reduction of wages.

While the print workers were defending or seeming to defend their jobs in an ailing trade, IG Metall was acting in a sector where unemployment played a

much lesser role. Franz Steinkühler, a IG Metall Representative for Baden-Württemberg declared: "We cannot hold back nationalisation". This explains the accusations of the newspapers like Die Welt who declared, not without some hypocrisy, at the end of the conflict (4th April), that IG Metall wanted to ignore the interest of the unemployed and only wanted to eliminate the disadvantages of rationalisation for those left in the factories, by means of a revalorisation of earnings.

In fact IG Metall had ignored the interests of everybody, except themselves. It is true that after two weeks 100,000 workers were out on strike and 150,000 more affected by lock-outs; it is true that the conflict had been extended to Bavaria (BMW cars and Messerschmitt aircraft); it is also true that the strike was having serious repercussions in other firms everywhere in West Germany. But the rank and file knew only too well that in the face of employer strength they would have to call on the help of the one million engineering workers of Rhine-Westphalia. Many workers did not keep their criticism of the leadership a secret. Instead of satisfying them Steinkühler demanded the re-opening of negotiations one week after the start of the strike.

They lasted two weeks at Stuttgart. Although he stressed other things, Steinkühler discussed guarantees against the financial consequences of re-organisation throughout the talks. Wages were discussed on only one of the days concerned. Already at Ludwigsburg the employers had shown a little "indulgence". They had only wanted to give 3,5%, but offered 4,6%. In the end they settled for a 5% wage rise and in addition guarantees concerning innovations. Steinkühler spoke of a "huge success which could only have been obtained by the workers' struggle" (die Welt 4th April 1978). However, the workers went back to work furious.

A report in Die Welt of the 6th April revealed the extent of the discontent. Steinkühler had never come in for so much criticism in his life. "It is just not on, to go on strike for three weeks just to get 0,4% more" was the view. Some of the workers interrupted a union executive meeting chanting "5 6 7 8". In front of the factories workers paraded banners indicating that for them substantial wage rises were far more important than guarantees. IG Metall had to mobilise its faithful to restore calm. It did not have an easy time. The return to work was not completed straight away. Die Welt (4.4.78) spoke of "weakness on the part of the union leadership". Der Spiegel had made exactly the same analysis in relation to the dock strike (see Echanges no. 14) which means one thing: the strength of the rank and file is growing and so the strong grip of the union is beginning to weaken a little. This is the origin of the recent conflicts and also the origin of

opposition to the unions which has resulted.

BELGIUM

From a Belgian friend, September 1978.

"Mid September several sectors of Belgian industry are in conflict, e.g. at a paint and paper producing factory Balamundi at Genval. There are strikes in the petrol industry, a clothing factory at Quaregnon in the Borinage (old industrial region of French speaking Walloon), again at Quaregnon in the textile factories and at the U.C.B. chemical company at Woudelgen in Flandres. At the same time as these strikes begin, another has just ended, the one in all the postal sorting offices throughout Belgium.

All these conflicts have one essential feature. They are very hard struggles often containing violent incidents and originate in every case from shop floor decisions. The first three strikes are against redundancies and closing of factories. At U.C.B. and in the post offices the demands were for wage increases and improved conditions. The most important conflict is in the oil industry; the oldest and largest refinery in Belgium the P.R.B. at Antwerp (Flanders) threatened with closure (it processes 40% of Belgium's total refined oil and belongs to Armand Hammers "Occidental Oil").

There are also rumours that the refinery at Albatros is also to close. The workers began spontaneous action after the union had refused to support them in their struggle. When the closure became imminent, they occupied the refinery. After that the union called a strike for the whole petrol industry, but only for workers, not for staff and management. The distribution of petrol by tanker lorries and trucks was also affected. At the moment the strike has been for two weeks. The tactic used by the government, employers and unions seems to be discouragement. All parties refuse to negotiate. In front of this deadlocked situation some workers have begun to respond with direct action outside usual union practice: tampering with tanker lorries (putting sand in the gear boxes) breaking windows, letting down tyres, syphoning off gas in tanks etc.). Some gun shots have been fired at tankers, a train carrying petroleum products was severely damaged, spiked planks were placed on the railway tracks, scabs have been attacked, factories and offices broken into and looted etc. Of course the union has disavowed these "violences" and called for calm.

At Balamundi's paint and paper factory - a part of the multinational trust in Luxembourg - at one time the workers sequestered all those at the negotiation table. At the clothing factory in Quaregnon there is an occupation and some attempts to continue production. The "socialist" union the F.G.T.B. has refused all talk of this. Its representatives do not even show

up at the factory. And this is because the secretary of state ... for the Walloon economy refuses to make a decision about the factories' owner, Salik, who like the secretary of state and the F.G.T.B. are all "friends". Salik has many friends in the Belgian Socialist Party and its leader mr. Colas is one of them. On the other hand the workers are more or less supported by the Christian union.

The V.C.B. chemical plant at Woudelgen is occupied because the workers want the same collective contract as workers in other chemical plants in the region. Recently the workers have attacked lorries carrying material to the factory. The attitude of the unions towards this struggle is again ambiguous, no one knows whether they are going to make it official or not.

The most important strike this year in my opinion has been that in the public sector. It broke out in Liège on April 30th in a post office over a question of holiday bonuses which had been reduced because of the raising of certain taxes. In two days the whole of Belgium was affected and all the public sector. Post and telecommunications, radio, official publications, customs and excise, railways etc. were on strike straight away. Straight away also the unions and the government gave in; on the second day of the strike the government already agreed upon an increase of holiday bonuses in the public sector. Instead of pinching 1 billion Belgian francs on all the basic demands and concede the most advantageous collective contract achieved since 1972.

TEXTS & DOCUMENTS

On Great Britain:

A number of the French review "Problèmes économiques" (from la Documentation Française) no. 1572 is devoted to the Britain and its problems seen from a capitalist viewpoint.

On Spain:

Some notes on the Spanish libertarian movement. Over half of the number of the French review La lanterne noire, no. 11 July 1978 is on this subject. Other texts in English, especially on the CNT in no.5 of the American review Root and Branch, P.O. Box 236 Dept. F, Somerville MA 02143, USA

On Sweden:

From a Swedish contact July 1978: "The austerity of the Swedish economy is not too serious, although the social-democrats are making a lot of noise about it for next years' elections. They are campaigning on a promise of "Work for everybody", but no one is listening to them. On the contrary, despite the recession, absenteeism is on the rise (it appears that it is

the management staff which has the highest rate of absenteeism)". This friend has promised some documents on the subject.

On the USA:

"Understanding the anti-radicalism of the National Civic Federation" by John Zerzan published in 1974 in English in the International Review of Social History. Photocopies from Echanges. Also photocopies available of discussions between Cajo Brendel and John Zerzan about unions in the USA (June-July 1978).

BOOK REVIEWS

Out of the Ghetto, my youth in the East End - Communism and Fascism 1913-1939, by Joe Jacobs.

This is the book he was writing when he died in March 1977. It is not just an autobiography, but a view of a major period of history in Britain, seen through the social conflicts and struggles of the East end, London's working class district. He shows how the British Communist Party, following orders from Moscow, refused like many other "fraternal" parties in the "movement", to confront fascism head-on (represented in England by Mosley's British Union of fascists). The Communists pulled back even when the fascists invaded the Jewish district, which led to a powerful rank and file anti-fascist movement, which the C.P. claimed as its own after the movements success.

We are offering a special subscription rate for the book from Echanges/London, £ 1 75 p, 15 FF, or \$ 3.

Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism, ed. by D.A. Smart.

This short book of 176 pages, but expensive (£ 2,95, paperback) is part of Pluto Press' series on Marxists. It was preceded by "Althusser's Marxism" and "Gramsci's Marxism". However, unlike the two predecessors, it is not a text on the thinkers concerned but a collection of 4 articles (two each) with an introduction. For information the pieces are:

- Pannekoek: Marxist Theory and Revolutionary tasks (1912), World Revolution and Communist Tactic (with the Afterword of 1920)

- Gorter: The origins of nationalism in the proletariat (extract from Der Imperialismus, der Weltkrieg und die Sozialdemokratie of 1915), The Organisation of the Proletariat's class struggle (1921).

The dates of the originals are important: when taken with the introduction they confirm the impression given in "official" Moscow publications that sometimes in the twenties Pannekoek and Gorter finished being interested in politics:

Gorter because of his death, Pannekoek to go back to looking at the Milky Way. The introduction is a reasonable summary of Pannekoek's and Gorter's careers, views and influences on them upto 1923. About what they did after that we are told nothing. Accordingly this look gives an impression of two "party-marxists" who were concerned with the spontaneity of the masses. They are presented as some sort of Dutch Gramsci. This may, for all I know, be a reasonably accurate picture of Gorter. Quite simply, so little of his work is translated into English that I cannot judge. However, it is clearly doing Pannekoek an injustice. In Pannekoek's later writings (Workers Councils, Party and class, The Failure of the Working Class) some of the ideas he holds in these texts regarding the self-determination of the working class are presented in a far more developed form, without him having to try to bend them into the restrictions of a theory of a party-led working class. So, not only does the book fail to show us what Pannekoek's Marxism was in his later years. By excluding these later works, it excludes precisely those works who might be of some use to us in our struggles, not of a general theory of "what is to be done", but as reflections on past struggles that might help us to gain a little more insight into our current struggles.

The texts presented in this book, with the possible exception of the 1912 piece by Pannekoek, do not seem to be useful in this way. The articles may be interesting to those who wish to look into the origins of Pannekoek's thought or other similar fields. But that is probably all that I can say in this book's favour.

Witches, midwives and nurses (a history of women healers)

Available from Black and Red, P.O. Box 9546, Detroit, Michigan 48202, USA. This old pamphlet written by two American feminists describes the gradual appropriation of medicine by men ... and capitalism. It has now been translated into French (from Echanges 8FF). Although some of us feel that the link between women's oppression and capitalist relations of production is made in a over mechanical way, we would nevertheless recommend this text.

NEW PAMPHLETS

- Autonomous struggles in the USA:

US miners' strike, the black out etc. (see no. 15 of Echanges). Will come out in French at the beginning of November. English translation as soon as possible.

- Workers' councils of Pannekoek, complete French edition is being reprinted in October. It will be sent to them who already ordered and paid.

DISCUSSION

On Chile

From a Chilean refugee, who has contacted us/August 1978.

From his conversation we gather that even before Allende came head of the "socialist" government, there were grass roots movements of much greater importance than the so-called "Chilean revolution". In the shanty towns of Santiago for example, the inhabitants had begun to set up rank and file organisations with power to execute decisions. They had created their own socio-medico services, their own building collectives, even their own law. This movement which could not be resisted began cautiously with small initiatives and existed as a tendency. When Allende was elected president and his part proclaimed "socialism" (obviously from above) this movement thought that there was nothing now in its way and was given great stimulus; it was then that the conflict broke out between this movement and the official organisations of "democratic" government, what the rank and file meant by socialism or democracy did not at all correspond with what the Allende government wanted. But Allende and his ministers had no power to stop the push of the rank and file. Two very distinct and hostile movements then developed; the army found itself arbiter in this situation and the rest we know.

This is only a brief summary of the substance of a long interview with our Chilean friend and we hope to make a pamphlet from this with other documents we possess. Our interview showed that even what is happening in Chile today is not at all what people everywhere think.